

YOUR SUBS SINCLAIR CLUB WITH YOUR HOST



Jonathan Nash

And now, as promised, the *Captain Blood* story. (Microscopes ahoy!)

The Ark According To Captain Blood, by spook French company Infogrames Software

Chapter One Postman Knocked On

This sinister little tale was told one grey and drizzly winter's day. The city was soaked to the bone. A constant honking of angry car-horns drilled and shook the air, even the doorbell seemed to be shouting, ringing around the 20th floor of 10 Ezzy Street, where a sheet of grimy paper taped to the door of number seven vibrated arrhythmically. The writing on the paper said: BOB MORLOK. FOR PITY'S SAKE KEEP QUIET.

"As if my car-horns could read..." thought the postman, shaking his head in disgust. He knocked. The door opened a fraction.

"You Morlok?"

"Gasp! How did you guess?" yawned a bleary shadow behind the door.

"I'm a postman, I'm here to deliver a letter. I'm wearing a heavy padded coat with bellhop attached into Morlok's unshaven face. Managing a tremble if not necessarily a smile, Bob Morlok was handed a box. Muttering what may have been 'thank you', he shut the door and looked around for the letter-opener. Then he remembered what had happened the last time he'd used it and ripped the envelope open with his teeth instead.

"Your royalties for the second quarter. Total before taxes—\$50. Best wishes, your publisher."

Bob tried but couldn't keep back a violent bout of nausea. He smoked his first Camel of the day.

"Thirty-five cents to live on for three months! I gotta program a major hit," thought Bob, "with a killer storyline. Or else." This attic room had a skylight. He gazed through it at the dripping rooftops and sighed. He was out of ideas. He shut his eyes and squeaked. Nothing came. Total block. Crushing his last butt into an overflowing ashtray, Bob announced to anyone who cared to listen (no one did): "Blood's dead. Stone cold dead as a doo. He'll write no more games and his pseudonym will be as how disappear from all local Computerama shelves for ever."

Bob Morlok sighed once more and decided on a breath of air. The joint in Binary Street was open. Loud and noisy but, as he turned over to the bar and ordered a coffee, Beside him, some kids were noisily wiping out alien on a video game. Bob turned to look. Intergalactic robots exploded with inhuman shrieks. The skinny kid locked onto the joystick was yelling triumphantly—he'd just made the hi score. Bob snorted. What a zero!

The intergalactic effect of breaking up the party atmosphere. "Oh yeah? Go ahead and beat my score, poppycock smacker."

This was what Bob had been angling for. His right hand closed over the stick and his left pushed play. The following carnage of screaming metal, green blood and exploding alien troopers was all over in a few seconds. Enemy losses were so sickeningly enormous that the score blocked on 999999. Without even loading. Bob was in B-L-O-O-D as the last hi-scorer.

"Y-you... B-Blood?" he stammered. "I... I... I... he'd just swallowed a live person."

"Gaze up in awe, junior," drawled Bob kindly. "You've just lived through a major moment in your life." With that he turned and disappeared through the door, leaving behind one unpaid-for coffee and a bunch of amazeballs.

"That really zapped 'em," grinned Bob to himself. He was savouring the glory so much that he didn't see the old man walking towards him. Bob Morlok looked down at the old guy sprawled on the sidewalk. "Gee, I'm really sorry. Are you okay?" he asked, helping the other to his feet.

"Sure, sure. Don't worry about it, young feller. Not your fault if I'm so absent-minded."

Bob's blue eyes switched on. "Wow! You can't be! You aren't! Damn it, you are Charles Darwin, the famous bio-whatever!"

"No need to shout it out, son; there may be newspaper hacks lounging in the trashcans."

Scenes like that were a dime a dozen. Your books really made a major impression. All that stuff about super bonus, scores like that, etc...

"Yeah, well that's one way off..."

"Hey, wait a minute. Aren't you supposed to be dead, theoretically?"

"Let's just say I'm living incognito for the moment."

"Well, That's cool. Let me buy you a drink. No, really." Morlok guided his new friend into a nearby bar. They sat down close to a pinball machine.

"Beer," said Bob to the guy who was taking the orders.

"Water, please," said Darwin.

"Water, huh," muttered the waiter and disappeared.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Mr. uh..."

"Blood, that's my name..."

"Blood? eh? My, My, Well, well."

The old man's gaze centred on the pinball machine. He glowered. "Accursed invention. I've been working on your game since you were born. That's the real reason I came here to Slick City—but who listens to an old doddery scientist?"

"Sithé. Your pseudonym is Sithé? You couldn't do better than that?"

"A long story. And unpleasant. I'm stuck with Sithé. No matter. Do you believe in aliens, Blood?"

Bob was taken aback by the question. He stammered, "Well, you know, I, er..." But his lack of conviction with unconvincing science was getting into gear.

"They're here!" he whispered, pointing his cane towards the video game. Then, looking Blood right in the eye, he thundered, "They're here! Paemons are reproducing in millions! They actually exist, do you hear me!"

Bob-Blood reeled in shock.

The old man suddenly stood up and left the bar. Bob was too stunned to stop him. That was the last he ever saw of Charles Darwin.

**Chapter Two
Another Day In Blood**

Back in his apartment, Bob's mind was still reeling. Darwin. Paemones, aliens... what if it were true?

"Ye God! If it's really happening, something's gotta be done!" thought Bob. "I know," he cried. "I'll infiltrate them. That's my new masterpiece! I'll need to create a being based on man, a kind of superman, completely competent, like, like MYSELF!"

Month's earlier, Bob had already at the keyboard, typing in the vital first instructions.

Month's pass. List-outs snaked through all the available space. Ashtrows were piled on ashtrows. Bob programmed on. Six months later, he had created a vessel called Ark, fitted with an onboard computer called bio-consciencefulness. Still later, the Ark was placed under the command of his computer double: Captain Blood. His mission: fight evil in all the computerised universe. Lastly, he created a bio-writer whose task would be to recount the amazing saga in detail.

Finally came the great day. He typed in the final momentous instruction: RUN. At that very instant, something major happened: Bob winked out. I mean, he physically disappeared!

**Chapter Three
Report From Ark's Bio-writer**

The Ark had materialised somewhere near Andromeda. Its shape corresponded down to the last hump to what Bob had programmed. You couldn't tell it apart from any other boring asteroid. Its stupendous mass prevented it from landing anywhere, but that was compensated for by the sheer amazingness of its bio-tech systems.

Inside, in a very snappy cockpit, lovingly done up by the program, a mummy looking like Bob sat in a padded armchair, in front of which a multitude of instruments flickered in the phosphorescent blue light diffraction. A massive 3D screen covered the wall. The bridge deck showed 000 when the screen came on, prolonging the cockpit reverie.

Blood came to life very suddenly. The first pains were awful: a tearing noise in his head, as if something had split his skull open. This pain gave way to a strange feeling: His first thoughts filled him with a sense of well-being, the first realisation that his biological evolution was now possible. He tested his memory implants. His palpa filled his mind: a sandy beach at summer's end. Salty breeze, childhood, Disneyworld...

"Honk here, Checksum implant: 10/10. Medicheck in progress."

The voice of Ark's bio-consciousness tore Blood from his daydreams.

"Mississippi, we're ready to receive state orders."

"Acknowledge the neutrino scanner," ordered Blood, "and for pity's sake don't bark so loudly. Try being normal."

"Understood, Mr Blood. Scanner on."

"Attaboy," approved Blood. "Now, Mr Honk, activate the local map."

The map appeared instantaneously on the cockpit screen. Blood studied it carefully. "Superimpose the older implants. An array of implants must cover that area. They were all converging on the centre of the Ark's position." Blood arched. "They're all over the bloody planet."

He wasn't exaggerating. The attack was as terrifying as it was sudden. The 3D screen revealed a pack of Invader-type fighters, fifth generation, bristling with advanced weaponry. Blood didn't hesitate. Only one thing to do: get out there, fast!

At that instant, a deafening exploding shook the Ark. The stalwart side had taken a direct hit from a multiple warhead missile.

"Hypelspace light now, dammit!" screamed Blood.

"Understood, Mister Blood. Do you require a vessel status update in triplicate?" came the walm and calligraphic.

"Get us out of here, you moron!" Heidly had finished, when he was thrust violently against the armchair by a phenomenal force. The Ark was plunging into Hypelspace. "Wow! We lealky oukwikked those guys!" smugged Blood.

"My legs are again; the ship has no significant damage. Some minor problems with the bio-litell. I'll repail ik immedikate. The Hypelspace jump did nolok conform klo skandalo phisodule. /... /... the jump was nok ikelokked, however, Oh, Gleak Heavens..."

"What's Kalki? What's happening?" loaded Blood. Feal glissped his soul.

"The Ark is getting destroyed during the jump... Oh, no!... the kelepolok has cloned you! Ak leask thilky copies are roose in dekashian galaxy!"

"What? Are you crazy?"

"Afraid now, captain. And thele's wlose... you're shot of vikal fluid. The process of degeneration has already skalked." Kl kl kl kl kl kl klklklklklklk... k... //!!!

To be continued...

SALUTATIONS!

Monday, 14th May 1993. 11:53. Colin emerges from his cubbyhole of an office. 'Jonathan... Andy... could you come in here for a minute, please?'

Oh, hang on.

Look, you'd better go and read the Next Month bit in the mag itself.



See the problem? To be honest, we've been sitting here month after month, wondering if today's the day when Colin the publisher calls us into his cubbyhole of an office to deliver those dreaded words, 'Get out.' (Or something along those lines, anyway.) And now it's happened.

Actually, it's slightly better than I first thought. At least we're getting a goodbye-ish, instead of being told three-quarters through bashing one into shape that it will be the last (as happened with CRASH and SU). As you read this, no doubt with tears splashing on the paper, I'm ringing round the various publishing houses and games companies, trying to track down as many YS veterans as possible for a big group photo. (Spook fact: every YS Ed but T'zer still works at Future.) It remains to be seen how much of a bump the bumper-ish will have, but rest assured (what an odd phrase that is) we'll be cooking up something a bit spesh with which to say goodbye to all you lovely people, and the other readers as well. (Yikes.)

Blimey, I'm feeling a bit depressed now. Aha! Some good news. Linda came a-visiting Monday afternoon – yup, she's been discharged from hospital. Hurrah! After astonishing the docs by recovering at twice the expected rate, she's been let loose in the community (or on the community, or whatever). It's brilliant. Andy and I went to see her in hospital with a present of Frank Sinatra's biography as written by Nancy Sinatra, and she loved it. I'd like to say it aided in her rapid recovery, but that's probably completely untrue, so I won't.

Right-o. Must be off. Things to do, people to hassle, prizes to send out (erk).

Your Sinclair – not gone, just forgotten. Poignant, eh? (If not entirely accurate.)

Happy trails, and see you next month,

Jonathan

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING MISS

A YS Photo Story

